

# User-interface.

The main user-interface should be as uncluttered, and as easy to use as possible. It should ideally use the minimum number of icons possible, and be quick, intuitive, and easy to understand. As the user-interface is where the player will control most of the game, it is one of the first impressions that the player has of the playability of the game. It must therefore allow the player to quickly get to grips with the control method without having to refer to the manual.

The main interface will consist of three main areas (as shown in fig 1.1);

## 1. The Geological section.

This is the area where the radar and map screen are shown. These will give information to the player according to the level of geologist available. It will always show all areas you have explored and all tunnels you have drilled. Level one will allow the players units to be displayed, plus any number of enemy's that you're units can see within their light range. Level two will show the location of rock monsters within a certain range of the geological building and all cavern areas on the current map, even if they have not been discovered. No detailed information will be given as to what is in them, only there location and shape. Level three will display **all** units on the map, including Rock monsters, cloaked Scavengers, rival units and buildings.

The radar screen is a powerful asset at higher levels, but may also hinder the player. It drains a large amount of energy and is also very susceptible to radar interference as the player digs deeper into the planet. Natural disasters like lightning storms on the surface will also cause interference with radar systems and also teleporting devices, making the player rely more on his own ability's as the game progresses.

## 2. The Main options section.

This section consists of two main areas;

**2.1 Icons.** A total of three icons are included here. These should cover all the options the player will need, and allow for a minimum amount of use of the side bar.

- **OPTIONS.** This icon will allow the user to access game options, such as sound and graphics, load, save and quit, and also game speed.
- **VIEWING MODE.** Here the icon will toggle between the standard isometric view point and if a unit is selected, first person perspective.
- **BUILD OPTIONS.** This icon will provide a short cut to quick build options, such as conveyer belts, gun towers, and teleporter posts.

All icons will also include a windows 'tool tip'. If the pointer is left over an icon for a short period of time, a small text message will inform the player of the icons function.

An extra option is also included on the icon bar, a large siren. This will act with the text bar below and give the player visual warnings of in game events, such as attacking Rock monsters, completion of a unit being built or an approaching earthquake. Once the siren has alerted the player to an event clicking on it will act as an automatic 'go-to' command, centering the view port on the appropriate area

**2.2 The main information area.** This area is set aside for displaying the information after an icon has been selected. It will display the sub menus for selections such as load and save, and also show the available units if build is selected, with all unavailable units ghosted out.

It will also be used to display any in game FMV such as messages from the surface to help the player, or to inform of any change of objectives during a mission.

### **3. The Score and text panel.**

This small area on the bottom right of the screen will always be visible and will inform the player of all gold and power crystals accumulated over a level. Above these scores will be a text box. This will allow for messages about in game events and allow players with no sound cards, or hearing disability's to play the game with no loss of quality.

## **General overview of interface.**

The interface will only be partly visible on screen during play. Both the radar and options sections will be located off screen during start of play (fig 1.2) and will be accessible by the user clicking on a small icon on the side of the screen. If clicked the selected area will then slide quickly out and stay there until the icon is clicked again. This is to allow the player the maximum amount of playing area for viewing the game in. As a lot of the options will be accessible from keyboard shortcuts the player may only need to have the radar out and choose to keep the options panel out of the way to enlarge his play area.

To help with this most of the unit orders will be done by the use of the mouse. Once a unit has been selected the mouse pointer will become 'Context sensitive'. A good example of this is once a mini-figure is selected, if the mouse pointer goes over any loose gold, or crystals it will change to the appropriate 'pick-up' icon, and if it goes over rock will change to a drill icon.

This idea will also extend to buildings, selecting a building will bring up a quick and concise set of icons, right clicking may repair it and left click up-grade it. All other options for buildings, such as what units it may produce will need to be shown on the side options panel.